

ART. VI.—*Further Note on a Bactrian Pali Inscription and the Samvat Era.* By Prof. J. Dowson.

IN a late Number of the Journal (Vol. VII. p. 376) I published a fac-simile of an Inscription from Takht-i Bahi, with some readings and observations. The stone on which this inscription is graven is damaged, and the fac-simile was not satisfactory. The original stone is in the Lahore Museum, and since the date of my publication, Colonel Maclagan, Superintendent Engineer in the Panjab, has had a series of photographs taken, under his own direction, of all the sculptures in the Lahore Museum. These photographs have been arranged in a book, a copy of which has been sent to the Library of the Society. The Takht-i Bahi inscription is among them, and from this new photograph the accompanying cut has been made of the words containing the date. I must add, however, that none of the copies are as satisfactory as the rubbing first received.

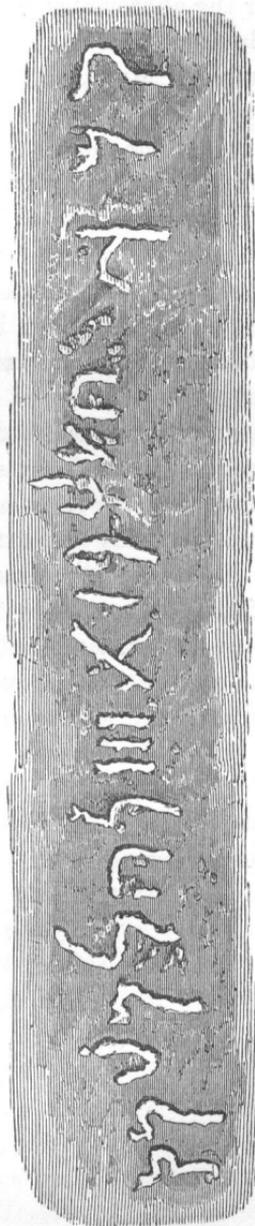
The main interest of this inscription lies in the word which I read as "Samvatsarasa." There can be no doubt whatever from the context that the letters represent some form of the word Samvatsara; for the analogy of all similar inscriptions would justify the restoration of the word, even if no traces of the letters were visible. In fact, it might be restored with almost the same certainty as the words "Anno Domini" in a Christian date. If the word in question stood by itself, it could not be read with certainty; but the context and the remnants of the letters seem to make the reading certain. In the lithograph previously published, the most doubtful letter was the medial compound *tsa*; but in the present copy that character comes out with sufficient distinctness. The most important letter is the final, which I read *s*. It is but a remnant, but what is left is very sug-

gestive of that letter. Here again the context removes the doubt. The next word is undoubtedly *satimae* "in the hundredth;" so that the previous letter must be part of the word "Samvatsara." The letter *sa*, the sign of the genitive, is the only letter that would make sense, and that accords with the remnant of the half-lost letter. So, I read still, and, if possible, with more certainty than before, the words "*Samvatsarasa satimae*," "In (the year) one hundred of the Samvat."

There appears in the engraving something which closely resembles the letter *l*; but after a careful examination of the photograph, I am satisfied that this is the result of an accidental flaw, by which the letters *ts* and *r* have been joined. Its sharpness and brightness show it to be of more recent production than the writing, and it is out of the regular line, and has not the space it would occupy were it a distinct letter.

My reading of the word Samvatsara has received the assent of that excellent scholar and critic Bábú Rájendra Lál, but Mr. Thomas in his paper (*suprà*, p. 10) has demurred to it. I have nothing to add on that point to what I have already advanced. Mr. Thomas's own words are, "I am unable to concur in the reading of Samvatsara, or to admit, if such should prove the correct interpretation, that the word

*Samvatsara* involved or necessitated a preferential association



with the Vikramáditya era, any more than the Samvatsara (J.R.A.S. Vol. IV. p. 500) and *Samvatsaraye* (*ibid.* p. 222), or the abbreviated *San* or *Sam*, which is so constant in these Bactrian Páli Inscriptions, and so frequent on Indo-Parthian coins." My contention is that the word *Samvatsara*, or its abbreviation *Sam*, wherever used alone, must be understood to mean the *Samvatsara* of Vikramáditya until the contrary is shown. *Samvat* and *Samvatsara* have designated the era of Vikramáditya for at least a thousand years, and it is not to be assumed, without any proof, that the word was ever used absolutely for any other era. There have been other *Samvats*, but then they have been called by their specific names, as *Ballabhi Samvat*; and the word *samvatsara* has been used simply for the word year, but then the era has been distinctly stated, as I before pointed out. The word *Samvat* has been so long absolutely used for the era of Vikramáditya that it has the right of a lengthened possession, and it is not to be set aside without distinct proof.

This word has offered a tempting gap in the tangled mazes of Hindu chronology for escaping difficulties and arriving at a conclusion, right or otherwise. A more strict adherence to the meaning it has so long borne is due to it, and will, it is to be hoped, lead to more satisfactory results.

What Mr. Thomas has said about "the exceptional use of the figure for 100" seems, as he says, possible, and at any rate, I think it more probable than my own suggestion in the former paper.